

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:  
transmitting a request to download data to a server;  
receiving information on a plurality of content providers storing said data obtained from said server; and  
transmitting identification information for one content provider of said plurality of content providers, which allowed download of said data, to said server along with payment for the download of said data.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said data is encrypted and contains a plurality of encrypted content files.
3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:  
transmitting a second request to download said data to said one content provider; and  
receiving said data and said identification information from said one content provider.
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein said identification information further comprises a distribution tool identifying said one content provider, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.
5. The method according to claim 1, wherein said information on said plurality of content providers further comprises said identification information for each content provider of said plurality of content providers.
6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:  
transmitting a request to download a distribution tool to said server; and

receiving said distribution tool from said server, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein said distribution tool is a digital watermark.

8. The method according to claim 2, wherein transmitting said identification information further comprises:

transmitting said payment for download of a decryption tool for decrypting said data; and

receiving said decryption tool from said server.

9. A method comprising:

receiving a request to download data from a client;

transmitting information on a plurality of content providers storing said data, if said request cannot be accommodated; and

receiving identification information for one content provider, which allowed download of said data, along with payment for the download of said data.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein said data is encrypted and contains a plurality of encrypted content files.

11. The method according to claim 9, wherein said identification information further comprises a distribution tool identifying said one content provider, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

12. The method according to claim 9, wherein said information on said plurality of content providers further comprises said identification information for each content provider of said plurality of content providers.

13. The method according to claim 9, further comprising:  
receiving a request from said client to download a distribution tool  
related to said client; and  
transmitting said distribution tool to said client, said distribution tool  
being embedded within said data.
14. The method according to claim 13, further comprising storing said  
distribution tool associated with said client.
15. The method according to claim 13, wherein said distribution tool is a  
digital watermark.
16. The method according to claim 10, wherein receiving said identification  
information further comprises:  
receiving said payment for download of a decryption tool for decrypting  
said data; and  
transmitting said decryption tool to said client.
17. The method according to claim 9, further comprising transmitting a fee to  
said one content provider.
18. The method according to claim 17, wherein said fee is predetermined and  
represents a percentage of said payment received for the download of said data.
19. A system comprising:  
a client configured to transmit a request to download data; and  
a server coupled to said client and configured to receive said request, to  
transmit information on a plurality of content providers coupled to said server  
and storing said data to said client, if said server cannot accommodate said

request, and to receive identification information for one content provider, which allowed download of said data, from said client, along with payment for the download of said data.

20. The system according to claim 19, wherein said data is encrypted and contains a plurality of encrypted content files.

21. The system according to claim 19, wherein said identification information further comprises a distribution tool identifying said one content provider, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

22. The system according to claim 19, wherein said information on said plurality of content providers further comprises said identification information for each content provider of said plurality of content providers.

23. The system according to claim 19, wherein said server further receives a request from said client to download a distribution tool, and transmits said distribution tool to said client, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

24. The system according to claim 23, wherein said server further stores said distribution tool associated with said client.

25. The system according to claim 23, wherein said distribution tool is a digital watermark.

26. The system according to claim 20, wherein said server further receives said payment for download of a decryption tool for decrypting said data from said client, and transmits said decryption tool to said client.

27. The system according to claim 19, wherein said server further transmits a fee to said one content provider.

28. The system according to claim 27, wherein said fee is predetermined and represents a percentage of said payment received for the download of said data.

29. The system according to claim 19, wherein said client further transmits a second request to download said data to said one content provider, and receives said data and said identification information from said one content provider.

30. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions, which, when executed in a processing system, cause said system to perform a method comprising:

transmitting a request to download data to a server;

receiving information on a plurality of content providers storing said data obtained from said server; and

transmitting identification information for one content provider, which allowed download of said data, to said server along with payment for the download of said data.

31. The computer readable medium according to claim 30, wherein said data is encrypted and contains a plurality of encrypted content files.

32. The computer readable medium according to claim 30, wherein the method further comprises:

transmitting a second request to download said data to said one content provider; and

receiving said data and said identification information from said one content provider.

33. The computer readable medium according to claim 30, wherein said identification information further comprises a distribution tool identifying said one content provider, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

34. The computer readable medium according to claim 30, wherein said information on said plurality of content providers further comprises said identification information for each content provider of said plurality of content providers.

35. The computer readable medium according to claim 30, wherein the method further comprises:

transmitting a request to download a distribution tool to said server; and  
receiving said distribution tool from said server, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

36. The computer readable medium according to claim 35, wherein said distribution tool is a digital watermark.

37. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein transmitting said identification information further comprises:

transmitting said payment for download of a decryption tool for decrypting said data; and  
receiving said decryption tool from said server.

38. A computer readable medium containing executable instructions, which, when executed in a processing system, cause said system to perform a method comprising:

receiving a request to download data from a client;  
transmitting information on a plurality of content providers storing said data, if said request cannot be accommodated; and

receiving identification information for one content provider, which allowed download of said data, along with payment for the download of said data.

39. The computer readable medium according to claim 38, wherein said data is encrypted and contains a plurality of encrypted content files.

40. The computer readable medium according to claim 38, wherein said identification information further comprises a distribution tool identifying said one content provider, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

41. The computer readable medium according to claim 38, wherein said information on said plurality of content providers further comprises said identification information for each content provider of said plurality of content providers.

42. The computer readable medium according to claim 38, wherein the method further comprises:

receiving a request from said client to download a distribution tool related to said client; and

transmitting said distribution tool to said client, said distribution tool being embedded within said data.

43. The computer readable medium according to claim 42, wherein the method further comprises storing said distribution tool associated with said client.

44. The computer readable medium according to claim 42, wherein said distribution tool is a digital watermark.

45. The computer readable medium according to claim 39, wherein receiving said identification information further comprises:

receiving said payment for download of a decryption tool for decrypting said data; and

transmitting said decryption tool to said client.

46. The computer readable medium according to claim 38, wherein the method further comprises transmitting a fee to said one content provider.

47. The computer readable medium according to claim 46, wherein said fee is predetermined and represents a percentage of said payment received for the download of said data.